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ABSTRACT

A group of supervisors of student-teachers developed a list of competencies that educators of student-teachers should be able to demonstrate and then developed activities, or indicators, that would allow educators to demonstrate these competencies in their own subject areas. The competency indicators/activities were tested by English supervisors in post observation conferences with student-teachers. The supervisors worked from the rationale that many of the language arts activities they suggested for the student-teachers might have value in developing their own supervisory competencies. As an aid in examining the learning situation, student-teachers were asked to draw pictures of themselves in the classroom environment and then to consider the spatial and sociometric relationships which were revealed; the supervisors did the same for the conference environment. Student-teachers also kept logs in which they recorded cognitive-oriented teaching actions and corresponding affective responses; supervisors kept their own conference logs. These and other self-training activities did lead to improvement in the supervisors' skills. (GW)

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Peter M. Schiff

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting on English Education (15th, Knoxville, Tennessee, March 24-26, 1977)

COMPETENCIES AND INDICATORS FOR ENGLISH SUPERVISORS

My participation in today's session grows from two realizations, neither earth shaking, but both important in my development as a supervisor of student-teachers. The first is that there were many things, in spite of intensive pre-service training, that I had to learn for myself in supervising student teachers. The second is that my colleagues were an invaluable source of ideas for helping me become a more competent teacher of teachers. I'm certain that many of us have made these discoveries and I hope that today's small-group discussion period will allow us to share, in a colleaguial setting, some of the strategies and techniques that have made us better supervisors.

On my first day of supervision at my present job, I made two observation visits. My morning observation was in an open classroom setting. I took my seat at the back of the room, took out my spiral notebock, and prepared to make a verbatim record as I had been taught. The student-teacher completed roll and told the students to go to their learning centers. Suddenly, there were enthusiastic seventh graders in all four corners of the room, reading stories, practicing spelling, preparing collages, and discussing writing. Where I sat was no longer the back of the room and with four groups of students working at once, neither my verbatim approach nor the clinical supervision strategies I had learned for measuring teacher/student interaction in

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Socratic teaching situations, were practicable. Considered judgment soon taught me to abandon a degree of objectivity, move around the room and record impressions of activities in each group.

My afternoon observation, that first day, was in a classroom so overcrowded and so small that my mere presence forced two students to double-up at desks with classmates. Here, common sense dictated that in the future, I bring a chair borrowed from another room.

True, these first-day dilemmas were hardly insoluble problems. Nevertheless, these and other such experiences made me realize that, despite an intensive supervisory training experience, including methods, foundations, and field components, I would have to develop for myself the broad-based competencies that would allow me to adapt to what is, after all, one of the exciting aspects of student-teacher field supervision--the wide variety of settings and situations in which a field supervisor finds himself daily.

I was fortunate to have two sets of colleagues to approach for ideas on how to improve my supervising skills. A group of classmates at Teachers College, Columbia University, in a seminar on supervision of student-teachers, got together weekly on a small-group basis to develop competencies we felt that student-teacher teachers should be able to demonstrate. Then, each of us took the resulting very tentative competency list we had created and tried to develop activities, or indicators, that would allow us to demonstrate competency in our own subject areas.

As the lone English supervisor in that group, I attempted to bring some of the language arts techniques I had learned from classroom instruction to bear upon teacher-teaching. This is where my second group of colleagues, fellow English supervisors at Fairleigh Dickinson University's Master of Arts in Teaching Program, came in.

Each year, the Fairleigh M.A.T. Program runs a campus summer high school which draws some two hundred junior and senior high school age students in search of enrichment, make-up or "go-ahead" credit in English, social studies, mathematics, science, and foreign language. This school serves as the pre-internship training arms of the Master of Arts in Teaching Program. Pre-service teachers complete a seven week practicum experience during the summer and then are state-certified to go into the field in September to serve a paid internship in area secondary schools.

Last summer, my fellow English supervisors and I decided to try out the competency indicator/activities I had developed for post-observation conferencing. We hoped that by so doing, we might (1) test the efficacy of the activities I had suggested, (2) revitalize our supervising experiences, and (3) help show, rather than just tell our student-teachers that effective instruction involves teacher self-examination and adjustment at all levels. In other words, we worked from the rationale that "if the English supervisor is a teacher of teachers, then many of the language arts activities he suggests for his student-teachers might have value in developing his own supervisory competencies."

To improve our ability to aid the student-teacher in examining the learning setting, we asked the student-teacher to draw a picture of himself in the classroom environment. We then helped the student-teacher to point out spatial and sociometric relationships among student-teachers, students, and classroom environment. One student-teacher, Bev, discovered that she stood nearest the students she liked best. Another, Julian, found that he was wont to place the desk between himself and the class as a protective barrier. After the student-teacher analyzed his/her drawing, we supervisors drew our own pictures of the conference setting. Showing the drawings to the student-teacher, we tried to point out spatial and sociometric relationships among the student-teacher, the supervisor, and the conference environment. One thing I discovered was that I was working from my observation notes so intently that I was often failing to make eye contact with my conferees.

To better help our student-teachers interpret the relationship between cognitive and affective domains, we asked them to keep a one-period log in which the student-teacher recorded every cognitively-oriented teaching action with a corresponding affective response. One day, the left (or cognitive) column of John's log said, "I review the meanings and spellings of 'affect' and 'effect.'" The right (or affective) column of John's log revealed, "My whole body stiffens in frustration." Working from this log, the supervisor helped John learn that there might be something dysfunctional about teaching confusing word pairs at the same time. Similarly, we supervisors kept our own conference logs. One of my colleagues, Rose, learned from her log that she was "demotivating"

her student-teachers during conference by finishing their sentences for them.

Other self-training activities designed to develop post-observation conference competencies included: making storyboards to illustrate crucial points--first in the classroom and then in the conference give and take; writing supervisor/student-teacher dialogues to suggest how each of us ideally wished the observed class had gone and the following conference might go; preparing audio tapes on which both the student-teacher and supervisor practiced strategies insuring coherence in multi-activitied lessons.

Such language arts oriented activities and the student-teacher/supervisor discoveries they engendered, often did much to develop our abilities to support our student-teachers with appropriate verbal and non-verbal cues. In addition, these activities often served to elicit student-teacher commitment to implementing techniques for future lesson improvement.

After evaluating our experiences this past summer, our four-person English supervisory staff agreed that we had improved our supervising skills and added creative techniques to our repertoire. This coming summer, we look forward to developing and implementing creative, humanistic, language arts-centered pre-observation strategies to help us and our student-teachers prepare more effectively for class.

What I hope we English teachers and teachers of teachers can do <u>today</u> during the small-group session is to pool our varied experiences and share activities that may serve to develop or indicate competencies in the supervision of pre- and/or in-service

teachers. I look forward to hearing ideas, strategies, and techniques that can help us increase our supervisory adaptability, become more stimulating teachers of teachers, and demonstrate to our supervisees that what we ask of them, we ourselves practice.